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Catholic Education in Indiana; Past and Present

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From the earliest beginnings the Catholics have maintained that education and religion must go hand in hand; that morality is best taught when based on religion, and finally that education cannot be severed from religion without an intrinsic loss to the former.

All students are wont to quote Spenser, who defines education as the "preparation for complete living." If we accept this definition, which is very praiseworthy, shall we not say then that the Catholics are building their system of education on a firm foundation? Who will deny that "complete living" necessitates a thorough knowledge of religion, ethics and morality, as well as the purely secular training offered in our public schools?

Because of this Catholic idea of education, it seems but logical that we first turn our attention to the work of the Catholic missionaries as an educational force in Indiana. The first invaders of a new country are generally hunters, traders and missionaries, and this of course is true of the country that came in time to be Indiana. When we think of Indiana as still a component part of that splendid stretch of country called the Northwest Territory, we can get our first glimpse of the Catholics at work as the pioneers in education in Indiana. The country adjacent to the Great Lakes and Canada is still rich in cherished memories of a great work done by Jesuit priests, who early traversed the paths that were to open the gateway to civilization in the Hoosier State.

These priests from across the sea, from homes of refinement and culture, renouncing all earthly ties of affection and duty, and entering into this unknown land upon a field of spiritual work, lived lowly lives in close communion with their swarthy flocks, which were scattered over a wide expanse of territory. They associated intimately with them, and hence could help them in various ways.

Perhaps we have a vague notion that these Jesuits came, talked religion, built churches here and there, but accomplished nothing of real value to us living here now. However, this idea must be rectified, for is it not a lasting honor to any man or woman who has the courage of his convictions to take the initiative in any great work that will raise humanity to a higher plane? These missionaries were not seeking man-made glory, nor ascendancy of power, nor material wealth; they followed the dictates of their consciences and became the means by which this new country was opened and made more habitable and promising to those less fearless than themselves.

We must keep in mind that the Jesuits, as our priests to-day, must engage in and complete a systematic course of college as well as theologic training. Between 1611 and 1791 there came three hundred and twenty of these Jesuits, who taught many of the people who were the forbears of much of Indiana's population today, and we will give them the credit for having done a good work.

At this juncture in the story, it seems well to mention that in the Treaty of 1763, when France ceded to England all the territory east of the Mississippi as well as Canada, she inserted a provision bearing on the religious rights of the people. The proviso was that all Roman Catholics might continue in the worship of that church without being molested.

Bearing more directly upon the history of Indiana was the work of Father Pierre Gibault. It was he who, in 1778, enthused the people of Vincennes, Indiana, to take the oath of allegiance to the government of the United States. He actually administered the oath himself to these French followers of his faith, in the rude little church of St. Xavier's in that village. Father Gibault had paved the way for the Americans by teaching to the people of his missions the issues and their significance, which caused the war between England and America. In his kind but masterful way he was able to present this subject of democracy, its aims and hopes, to his people so that he induced them to declare for the United States as against England. Without education on his own part and an ability to dispense it to his followers, there might have been a different story to tell about Indiana. Father

Gibault worked in harmony with George Rogers Clark, and indeed shares the honors for having accomplished the conquest of the Northwest Territory. The late Hon. William H. English of Indianapolis in his history says, "During the long period between Father Gibault's arrival in the Illinois Country and the capture of Kaskaskia, he was a leading character in everything pertaining to the spiritual, social, educational and material prosperity of the ancient French villages."

History records that the first known regular school in the State of Indiana was that of the Catholic priests, Father Rivet, at Vincennes in 1793.

Alongside that honor belongs the credit to the Catholics of inaugurating and establishing free school education in Indiana, the first free school in the State being that of the Right Reverend William G. Bruté, the first bishop of the old Diocese of Vincennes, in 1834. Among the most discouraging surroundings and also against the expressed judgment of his non-Catholic neighbors and acquaintances, besides the remonstrance of his own flock, he practically gave rise to the system by making, in 1834, the schools which he had just established at Vincennes free to all, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, without any reservation whatsoever. This start for free education, it must be remembered, was made twenty years before the present system of free public schools was established in Indiana.

There is an erroneous opinion among some people that about all the parochial schools teach is religion. This belief also needs to have a little light shine upon it. Always, as today, the Catholic parochial schools have interwoven religious and secular training; but Catholics are not opposed to universal education, or to taxation for schools, or to compulsory education. Neither do they oppose any methods or contrivances of whatever kind which may assist in the diffusion of knowledge to the masses. But parochial schools do insist, moreover, that a knowledge of religion is the primal and most essential element of true human culture.

For the most part the regular work in our Indiana parochial schools begins at 8:30 in the morning, when one regular period is given over to catechism instruction. Once or twice a week the time of another recitation unit is given over

to Bible history. These are about the only directly religious subjects taught in our parochial schools. However, in some of the grades, more frequently in the lower, when the mind is in its best stage of plasticity, Catholic readers and some other distinctively Catholic text-books are used. For the remaining grades many of the text-books are those approved by the State and hence do not differ from those of the public school.

At present there are in the State of Indiana two hundred nineteen parochial schools presided over by about thirty-eight hundred teachers.

All Catholics must pay double taxation for the maintenance of schools because for the greater part all parochial schools are kept up by tuition paid by the parents to the head of the school. Wherever a parish is able, there are schools maintained by a special fund, and such schools are free. Frequently it happens that a wealthy individual dies and leaves an endowment to maintain free Catholic schools. But generally speaking, Catholics are required to pay taxes into the public school fund as well as to maintain their own schools.

While this work is a hardship on some, still the Catholics are alive to the needs of their children and bear the burden as graciously as possible. In Catholic parochial schools the tuition is ordinarily fifty cents per month. In cases of people too poor to meet this obligation arrangements are made with the pastor to remit even this small amount.

A rather remarkable state of affairs prevails at Jasper, Indiana. In this little town of some four or five thousand inhabitants all are Catholics save about four hundred. Here all schools are presided over by Catholic sisters, but State text-books are used by the pupils the same as in public schools. For the Catholic pupils instruction in catechism is given from 8:30 to 9 a. m. The small minority of Protestants do not have to come until 9 o'clock, at which hour regular school work begins. These sisters take the regular State examination and receive their salaries from the public school fund. I am told that this arrangement in Jasper is quite harmonious and agreeable to everybody.

While we do not hear of the Catholic teachers taking the teachers' examination on the last Saturdays of the month,

nevertheless they attend a school and take a normal course of three years, and many complete college courses before teaching in the parochial schools. They then must pass a satisfactory examination before receiving their appointments. Every Catholic sister in the school is constantly urged to fit herself to teach the higher grades, and so they are not allowed to get into that blissful stage of a "finished education." Promotions come with the capabilities displayed by the sisters. When we consider for a moment that the majority of the Catholic high schools are now commissioned and certificates from the eighth grades accepted without entrance examination, we must concede the fact that parochial schools are doing a high standard of work. All over the State of Indiana parochial schools are working towards standardization and are endeavoring to keep up with the best that is offered in education. Many of these schools have introduced courses in domestic science and manual training wherever funds permit, but of course these courses are more or less limited by finances.

The parochial school system is diocesan in its organization. The supreme educational authority is the bishop, who administers and governs the schools of his diocese through the assistance of a school board. The immediate authority is vested in the pastor, whose task it is to provide a building, salaries, teachers, etc. The principal of the school is usually appointed by the religious community to which she belongs. There is a strong tendency and much has already been done towards unifying and systematizing our parochial schools. During the summer different institutes are held similar to public school normal sessions, only lasting a shorter time, usually about six weeks. Our local sisters attend St. Mary's of the Woods to avail themselves of this summer training. In 1911 the Sisters' College, under the auspices of the Catholic University of America, was opened in Washington, D. C., and there Catholic sisters may attend courses in professional training.

The sisters in the parochial schools do not mingle with the world in a large sense, but rather isolate themselves, keeping in mind the training of the children entrusted to their care and little else. They have no ties calling for the expend-

iture of time outside of their religious and professional worlds and hence can indulge in careful, quiet, thoughtful study, which is indeed a fruitful field for the teacher who would succeed.

The salaries of parochial teachers range from about two hundred to three hundred dollars per year, this being about one-half the amount paid to public school teachers for the same grades. Catholic sisters are far removed from entering the profession for utilitarian purposes. Other fields are open to them, but they choose teaching because it appeals to them as conducive to the greatest good to the greatest number. The teachers are Catholic nuns in all parochial schools, except perhaps in some outlying country districts where it is preferable to have a man instructor.

Not only did the Catholics blaze the way for education in the State of Indiana, but they have also remained at their post, pursuing higher education as well. As evidence of their earnestness in this field, Indiana now has twenty-four Catholic colleges and academies, all in good financial standing as well as being accredited with the colleges maintained by the State.

As types of Catholic schools for higher education, I will recount briefly the history of four of these. Our attention is first drawn to St. Mary's of the Woods, for this is the pioneer conventual school, established in Indiana in 1840. On October 22, 1840, six sisters belonging to the Order of Providence arrived from Ruille Sur Loir, France, to begin a great task.

Primarily, they purposed to teach their students right conduct, and to teach them culture and the value of æstheticism through the medium of art, languages and literature. Music and philosophy were also to aid in the process of developing refinement and all the fine ideals that the world regards as more purely womanly. The sisters thought and proposed to inculcate their ideas in the minds of their students by constant vigilance, and by zealously guarding them against any influences that might hinder such development. By their companionship with the girls and by emphasizing always the highest ideals of womanhood, they sought so to mold their characters that they would possess minds well equipped to enter

and influence human society and institutional life. Later in the history of St. Mary's of the Woods science and other branches were added to the curriculum, to meet the ever-growing demand of a well-rounded education.

The illustrious but unassuming leader of the six who first came to St. Mary's of the Woods was Mother Theresa Guerin, widely celebrated for her beneficent and religious activities. Today at St. Mary's are the highly prized gold medals Mother Guerin earned at the French Academy in Paris. These had been given her with the plaudits of the court and religious authorities.

To be able to image clearly the conditions encountered by Mother Guerin upon her arrival, I quote her words:

"Suddenly we stopped in the midst of a dense forest. It was growing dark. Father Beteux briefly announced that we had arrived. We were perfectly silent; the gravity of the moment excluded any loquacity. Imagine our astonishment upon finding ourselves still in the midst of the forest, no village, not even a house in sight. Walking a short distance down the hill, we beheld through the trees on the other side of the ravine a log house with a shed in the rear. 'There' said the good priest, 'is the farm house, where the postulants awaiting you have a room in which you may lodge until your house is completed.'"¹

To many people the Catholic nuns are a quiet, shy, retiring set of women with no interest outside a narrow little sphere; but such notable examples as the saintly Mother Guerin and her little band prove the depth of character, the nobility of a fearless life and a sustaining courage not usually accredited to womankind.

The great advocates of woman suffrage are unearthing all the examples of heroines who have influenced the world's history. Frequently we hear of the women who have been factors in the reformation of slum and tenement districts, or of workers on the child labor question and many other momentous questions. These ideals are all praiseworthy, but it were well not to forget the grandeur of the work, exemplified in Mother Guerin, who, modestly and unnoticed by the world, has established a monument that will be handed down to posterity as a means for great good to a vast number of people.

Arriving October 22, 1840, Mother Guerin found three or

¹ Life of Mother Guerin-Betuex.

four little log huts scattered among the woods, one of which was used as a chapel. A short distance farther were the half-finished walls of what was to be St. Mary's Academy. At last they were domiciled in Indiana, a place they had come far to find. At once they went to work to learn the language of their newly adopted country. They also rolled logs and assisted in the clearing of one hundred thirteen acres that the bishop had bought to be the site of the school. Despite most delicate health, Mother Guerin was the life and soul of every endeavor, keeping up the spirit of these exiles and directing their hopes to the future. Growth was slow, but four months after their arrival sixteen persons had assumed the training of postulants in their religious life. In short trips to Louisville and Cincinnati, Mother Guerin took occasion to visit schools and consult with the missionaries in regard to the best manner of conducting her work. She had taught seventeen years as superior in one of the largest establishments in France before coming over.

In 1841, a year after her arrival, Sister Guerin was ready to open a boarding school in their now finished six-room brick school. Displaying her absolute faith in the Maker, she said: "We must make a beginning and trust to Providence. If it is God's work it will not fail." On July the fourth the first pupil presented herself, and on the next day four more came. At last the new work was launched—an American school opened for American girls, with classes both in French and English. From the very inception of St. Mary's Institute, as it was then called, the higher education of women was its prime object. In 1846 the charter granted by the Indiana legislature empowered the sisters to confer degrees when time and progress would authorize it. Mother Guerin was not satisfied to conduct a boarding school only, but was indeed blessed with the capacity of vision. Her great desire to extend her good work in Indiana materialized in a number of missions scattered throughout the State and all were under her supervision.

In 1889 St. Mary's of the Woods was visited by a very disastrous fire, which caused about \$18,000 damage. Much of it, however, was covered by insurance. The fire came when

the men who worked about the school were two miles distant cutting ice, so the work of fighting the fire devolved upon the sisters and pupils. A message to Terre Haute resulted in the dispatch of eight hundred feet of hose. This arrived at St. Mary's over the old wagon road, consuming about three-quarters of an hour. Through many vicissitudes and trials, St. Mary's of the Woods has risen from the most meager beginning to one of the finest and most up-to-date academies and colleges in the United States. The whole keynote of this marvelous growth is found in one of Mother Guerin's maxims, I think. She said, "Let us make no account of our personal feelings except to sacrifice them." This was what she did in very truth.

From the time of alighting from the train and going up to the entrance of the college one has ample time to think about the vastness of the undertaking of the founder of St. Mary's of the Woods. The approach to the college as it now stands is a very long driveway, perhaps equal in length to several city blocks. There, away from all noise, sequestered among sturdy old trees of early Indiana history the magnificent buildings, stands the work of the good Sisters of Providence. During the last twenty-five years the institution has shown remarkable growth. From a poor frame building St. Mary's of the Woods has expanded to an array of buildings massive, elegant and adapted to all the growing needs of a first-class college. It encloses within its precincts a six hundred-acre plot and is a little world in itself. It is self-governing, self-sustaining and presents all the charm of sylvan environment, yet possessing all modern conveniences. The principal buildings are arranged in a semi-circle with a frontage of eleven hundred feet. A beautiful white stone church occupies the center of the group. To the east is the convent and to the north is the normal training school for those who aspire to become members of the community. A dormitory to house the students, a conservatory of music, a gymnasium and natatorium are all elegant structures and form a part of the whole, to say nothing of the pharmacy, laundry, bakery, power house, kitchen and other buildings. Every summer the sisters return to this mother house at St. Mary's of the Woods

from the cities in which they have been engaged during the scholastic year. A regular normal institute is conducted there, during which lecture courses and studio work by eminent educators, professors and artists are given. A new college hall known as the Ann Therese Guerin hall now houses the college students who desire professional training. Normal courses of three years are also maintained with special courses along all lines for those who care to specialize. The work being done at St. Mary's of the Woods is now up to the standard of the best colleges in the United States. First chartered, as has been said, to confer degrees in the college work, the power was confirmed and extended in 1908 by the legislature of Indiana. St. Mary's of the Woods is accredited as a standard college by the Indiana State Department of Education and is affiliated with the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

In the crypt beneath the main altar of the church now repose the hallowed remains of Sister Guerin, founder and leader in this great work. With a little stretch of the imagination one could imagine himself in the Catacombs underlying Rome as he slowly follows the winding passages to this little tomb of so noble a woman. The air of quiet reverence and sanctity pervaded the whole atmosphere and for a few minutes one loses himself in thought of the power that enabled Sister Guerin to undertake such a great work, so far away from her home, in an alien land, among unknown people.

During the last scholastic year there were about two hundred students at St. Mary's of the Woods. These Sisters of Providence now have twenty-nine missions. Aside from the school work the Sisters of Providence are engaged throughout the country in hospitals, where as nurses they are devoting their lives to nursing the sick back to health. Many are also engaged in charity work of one kind or another while many are caring for the orphans in Catholic asylums, scattered here and there.

On the whole the Sisters of Providence are exercising a far-reaching influence, doing noble work along educational, religious, and charitable lines in many different communities and, while their accomplishments are not heralded abroad,

nevertheless results prove their courage, self-sacrifice, and perseverance.

The University of Notre Dame traces its humble origin back to 1842. Father Sorin with seven brothers of The Holy Cross set out for a new location of their school. For a year previous the Holy Cross Community was located at St. Peter's about twenty-seven miles from Vincennes in Daviess county. It had been in contemplation to erect a college at this point but as there was already a Catholic college at Vincennes, the bishop demurred and offered the community a tract of land he owned on the St. Joseph river, provided a college should be erected there within two years. After consideration the brothers accepted and set out for the new place. After travelling through the wilderness in bitterly cold weather they stood on the ice-bound shore of lake St. Mary, November 26, enchanted with the marvelous beauties of the scene of their future labors. The total amount of money at the command of the young community on its arrival at the lakes, was \$1,500. Material and labor were volunteered and a log structure, 24 x 46 feet, was erected in December, but was not dedicated until March 19, 1843. But this building was needed for other purposes than a chapel and a second story was added as a dormitory for the sisters, who were expected to arrive from France the same spring to take charge of the domestic department of the university and a little Indian chapel, erected by Father Badin about 1830, was utilized as a dormitory for the brothers. The exchequer was exhausted and 1842 passed without the erection of the contemplated building. A square house, now known as the farm house was erected at the edge of the lake, in 1843. This served for collegiate purposes for nearly a year, the first pupil being Alexis Coquillard, afterward the wealthy wagon-maker of South Bend. The terms per quarter for students were fixed at eighteen dollars for tuition, board, washing and mending. Like all other institutions, the growth was gradual and in 1844 the legislature gave Notre Dame university power to grant degrees. Literature and oratory have been cultivated from the very beginning at Notre Dame, dramatic and debating clubs were formed and many were the

orations heard even in its early days. Father Sorin (1842-1865) was the first president of Notre Dame and Father Patrick Dillon the second (1865-1866). The present president is Father Cavanaugh. There are now six distinct colleges at Notre Dame offering twenty-two different courses. It is making great progress in arts, letters, science, engineering, architecture and law, and possesses the latest and most complete equipment. The main library has 75,000 volumes and 16,000 manuscripts. In the general museum the historical collection is especially noteworthy and valuable. Notre Dame is doing for the American youth what St. Mary's of the Woods is doing for American girls; to give them a thorough understanding of secular training added to an appreciation for the religious side, which makes for the broadest possible culture.

Located one mile west of Notre Dame is St. Mary's Academy conducted by sisters of the Holy Cross. It was established by Father Sorin also in 1844, in Bertram, Michigan. In 1855 the community moved from Bertram to St. Mary's in St. Joseph county, Indiana, the present site of the mother-house of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. In 1857, the union of temporal interests between Notre Dame and St. Mary's was severed and a separate administration has been maintained ever since, though by special privilege Rev. E. Sorin was allowed to act as ecclesiastical superior over both congregations, that composed of the priests and brothers and that of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. About this time Mother M. Angela, a woman imbued with the highest religious aspirations and endowed with rare mental gifts was elected provincial and until her death in 1887, she held the office. Today St. Mary's Academy is a city in itself including a system of buildings, connected yet distinct, embodying college, academy, music hall, convent, loretto, presbytery, infirmary, laundry, etc. It is built in the form of a T and every room is an outside room with an abundance of daylight and fresh air. The course of studies is as extensive, long and thorough as long experience in teaching and a large and capable staff can make it. The degree of excellence attained at St.

Mary's in the musical and art departments has long been recognized by people all over the country. While special attention is given to the fine arts, they are not cultivated to the neglect of the practical sciences, as a visit to the classes of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry would fully demonstrate, no pains having been spared to secure a physical cabinet worthy the name and as a result, the academy at St. Mary's has a collection of instruments from the best manufacturing establishments of Europe for illustrating the laws of sound, light, electricity, heat and magnetism as well as the principles of mechanics. The Sisters of the Holy Cross at St. Mary's have three objects: education, the care of the sick, and the care of the orphans. St. Mary's is constantly growing and bids fair to become one of the largest Catholic institutions in the United States.

The convent of the Franciscan Fathers at Oldenburg came into being under its present name August 7, 1866. It is located in Franklin county, Indiana, and in 1868 a class of clerics belonging to the same province took up their residence here in order to pursue their studies in preparation for the holy priesthood. The convent of the Sisters of St. Francis, at Oldenburg was established in 1850 by Rev. F. J. Rudolph. On January 6, 1851, the first steps were taken towards the founding of a teaching community with the auspicious aid of Sister M. Theresa. She became its first superior general under the title of Mother. The old convent was reconstructed in 1899-1901. The community has advanced steadily, though under great difficulties. The mother-house at Oldenburg consists of the convent proper, the novitiate, the infirmary, the academy and other buildings. At present (1916) Oldenburg numbers seventy-three mission schools in which 13,500 children are educated. These schools are located mainly in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky and Kansas. The mother general always has been and still is its president with the directress as vice-president. In 1876 the conservatory of music was added to the academy building.

The grounds at Oldenburg comprise 400 acres and the church which was built at a cost of \$80,000 is one of the

finest structures in the State. In 1900 a new convent was completed and dedicated; the same year the community of St. Francis Sisters celebrated their golden jubilee. The efficiency of this school has been recognized by the Indiana State Board of Education and its normal department has been accredited by the State Teachers' Training Board.